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DOE NEWS

For Immediate Release:
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HANFORD WORKERS BEAT ANOTHER CLEANUP MILESTONE
Milestone for retrieving buried waste finished early four years in a row

The Department of Energy (DOE) and contractor Fluor Hanford have now retrieved more than 7,200 cubic meters (34,600 drum equivalents) of waste generated from producing plutonium in the 1970s and 1980s at the Hanford Site in Washington State - meeting a Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) milestone, due December 31, 2007, ahead of schedule. This is the fourth year in a row DOE and Fluor have met the annual milestone for retrieving waste ahead of schedule.

DOE and Fluor Hanford are on track to remove up to an estimated 15,000 cubic meters (equivalent to more than 70,000 drums) of radioactive waste from burial trenches in the 200 West and 200 East Areas of Hanford by the end of 2010 as required by the TPA. Next year's TPA milestone calls for retrieving a cumulative total of 9,700 cubic meters of waste from Hanford's burial trenches by December 31, 2008.

"Retrieval of these drums is a complex job that can present challenges, but the workers continue to overcome those challenges to drive down risk to the environment, and aggressively complete Hanford cleanup activities," said Matt McCormick, assistant manager for the Central Plateau. "For a fourth year

in a row, we can claim success, and we are on track for the next year."

The material was retrieved from trenches in the 200 West Area of central Hanford to meet the milestone being announced today.

"We have removed nearly one half of the waste planned for removal from these burial trenches," said Dale McKenney, Fluor Hanford's vice president of Waste Stabilization and Disposition. "As we're doing the work, we're encountering more and more badly corroded drums that require special handling. Our workers have had to come up with new approaches at every turn to help us meet our cleanup commitments and protect our employees and the environment."

"Retrieving this high-risk waste from trenches removes the immediate threat to the environment. This is a necessary first step in moving the waste along its journey for ultimate disposal at the Waste Isolation Plant, and we are pleased with the progress in the transuranic retrieval work," said Jane Hedges, Ecology's Nuclear Waste Program manager.

The waste is in the form of contaminated debris, tools, clothing, and other materials generated in the 1970s and 1980s and placed in 55-gallon drums and boxes. The boxes range in size from a small refrigerator to a UPS truck. The drums weigh between 65 and 2,000 pounds. The waste containers were stacked on asphalt pads, covered with plywood, draped with tarps, and then covered with soil. Once the containers are retrieved, workers determine the type of waste they contain and where they will be disposed. If the container has low-level waste, it can be disposed of in a lined, permitted facility on the Hanford Site; if the contents are transuranic waste, the waste is prepared for shipment to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in New Mexico. Hanford has sent the equivalent of more than 12,750 drums worth of waste to WIPP so far.

" The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) congratulates DOE and it contractors on achieving this cleanup milestone and looks forward to continued progress in cleanup of the Central Plateau," said EPA Program Manager, Hanford/INL Project Office Nick Ceto.

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